

U.S. Embassy Berlin-American Community Newsletter

Third Quarter

2007

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Contact Information and Operating Hours

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Public Hours: 8:30am-12 noon

Monday-Friday

Phone Inquiries: 2-4pm only, Monday-Friday

(030) 832 9233

Email: ACSBerlin@state.gov

From the Consul

Dear Fellow U.S. Citizens,

The kids are back in school, the days are slowly growing shorter, and the leaves are beginning to change from green to gold. These are all sure signs that Fall is already upon us. I hope you were able to take some time this past summer to relax and enjoy the many wonderful sites our host country has to offer, and perhaps even visit the United States.

The recent arrests by German police of individuals involved in plotting attacks against U.S. targets in Germany serves as a reminder to all of us that, although we are fortunate to live in one of the safest countries in the world, as Americans resident overseas, we must remain vigilant and take common

sense precautions to avoid falling victim to terrorism and other crimes directed at U.S. citizens. If you have not done so lately, I urge you to read the Department of State's Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, which can be found at www.travel.state.gov under International Travel Information see Public Announcements.

If you have been following the presidential election campaigns in the U.S., you have probably heard that state party primaries will be held earlier than ever next year, with some as early as January 2008. This latest edition of our American community newsletter focuses on overseas voting, and we plan to host another Information Fair in October with an emphasis on voter assistance services provided by the

Embassy, and our Consular Agency in Bremen. Once the date and venue have been set, we will invite all U.S. citizens registered with the Embassy, including anyone who previously registered with the consular section in Hamburg.

As always, if you have suggestions on how we can better serve you, our fellow American citizens in northern Germany, please do not hesitate to contact us at ACSBerlin@state.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Batchelder Consul



American Citizen Services

The staff of the American Citizen Services Unit at the U.S. Embassy Berlin is here to serve you. We offer a variety of routine and emergency consular services to U.S. citizens visiting and residing in northern Ger-

Passport Renewal

many, including:

- Passport Amendments
- Emergency Passports
- Notarials
- Voting Services
- Consular Reports of Birth Abroad
- Marriage Affidavits

Note: various forms of identification and supporting documentation are required for most services we offer. Please check our website for the documentary requirements for services you are seeking.

For further explanations or information on any of the services listed above, please visit our website (www.usembassy.de) and click on the U.S. Citizen Services tab at the top of the page.

Walk-Ins Welcome!

Non-Immigrant Visa Services

The U.S. Embassy's Visa Unit provides services to foreign nationals who wish to visit, study, or work temporarily in the United States. Because entry requirements and visa application procedures change frequently, we recommend that visa applicants visit our website (www.usembassy.de) before calling to schedule an interview appointment. Below are some helpful hints on applying for a Visa.

- The DS-156 visa application form must be completed electronically at http://evisaforms.state.gov
- To obtain info and book an interview appointment, call the Visa Information Service call center at 0900 I-850055 (€I.86/min), 7am-8pm M-F, or visit http:// www.usvisa-germany.com/.
- The applicant should be prepared to explain and document his/her purpose of travel to the U.S.
- Most EU nationals may visit the United States for up to 90 days for business or tourism without a visa. If you are from a country not eligible for visa-free entry, or are traveling for a purpose other than business or tourism, you must apply for a visa.

For fees and other services check us out on the web: www.usembassy.de



A Primer on Overseas Voting

Voting. There is possibly no civil right Americans cherish more than the right to vote; there have been five separate amendments to the U.S. Constitution addressing voting rights. As the most recent presidential elections have proven, every vote counts. Americans living overseas have an equal right to vote in federal elections, but voting from overseas requires a few extra steps. Since, by some estimates, as many as 20% of absentee ballots are rejected, it's vital that expatriates understand those steps.

Register to Vote:

Each state has its own rules and policies for voter registration, with special requirements for Americans living overseas. There are different rules for members of the uniformed services, and for civilians in some states. The simplest way to find out what your state's specific requirements are is to go to www.fvap.gov and find the link for your state. Many states now offer on-line voter registration verification, so you can check to see if a previous registration is still valid. Federal law requires states to keep voters on the registration roles for two federal election cycles (four years), but it's never wise to assume that you're still registered.

The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) can be used to register **and/or** request an absentee ballot. Every state now accepts the on-line version of the form, or has its own version available on line. You may also request the postcard version of the form from the Embassy or Consulate in your district.

An informal poll conducted by the Oversees Vote Foundation showed that problems with voter registration were the largest contributor to ballots being received too late, or not at all. The critical elements to using the online or federal post card registration form are:

- Follow your state's specific instructions, and provide all the information requested.
- Write legibly.
- Sign and date the form.
- Mail it to the correct address.
- Include your current mailing address.

Consular Officers' Role:

We will notarize your documents for you for free, if it is required by your state. If you don't have access to a printer or you're a resident of American Samoa or Guam (these two territories don't accept the on-line form), please call or email our Consular staff. We'll be happy to mail you the Federal Post Card Application for Registration and Absentee Ballot Request. And, we can send your ballots to the United States, using our postal system.

Request an Absentee Ballot:

Another faulty assumption is that, just because you're registered, you'll automatically receive absentee ballots. Most states require a request to the voter's local Supervisor of Elections. In some states, all this takes is a phone call or email request if you're already registered; others require a written, notarized document. The Consular staff at the U.S. Embassy Berlin, the Consulates in Munich and Frankfurt, and the Consular Agent in Bremen can notarize these requests for free – normal Consular fees are waived for election materials.

Voting by Citizens Who Have Never Lived in the United States:

Many states have provisions for this contingency, and allow voters to register if a parent or a spouse is eligible to vote in the state. Some of those states restrict voter registration to only federal elections. Again, the www.fvap.gov website has a special section concerning this topic, with links to the states with that provision.



Vote:

When you receive your balloting materials, read the instructions carefully to make sure your ballot isn't discarded on a technicality. Return the ballot by mail, by your state's deadlines.

Worst case: If you've registered and requested balloting materials within your state's time limits, but haven't received your balloting materials within 30 days of the election, you may still vote in federal elections using the "Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot for General Elections." This form is also available on line, or from the Embassy or Consulates. Complete instructions are on the form.

Mail Your Ballot:

You may mail your ballot from your home here in Germany, using the international postal system, or at no cost through the Embassy or Consulate's postal system. Again, it's important to check your state's individual deadline requirements, and to make sure you mail your ballot so it arrives in time. You can even enclose your completed, sealed ballot in a German envelope with appropriate in-country postage and send it to us; we'll put it in the U.S. postal system for you. If the ballot envelope is not marked 'postage paid', please make sure to affix sufficient U.S postage to the envelope.

Other Expatriate Resources in Germany and on-line:

For Americans who like to be active in party politics at the grass-roots level, there are branches of the Republican and Democratic parties in Germany. You can find more information at www.republicansabroad.org and/or www.democratsabroad.org. Younger voters and older teens might find the information at www.RocktheVote.com appealing and informative.



Election Trivia

If we were playing Jeopardy, these questions would be in the "Tough Election Trivia" category.

Good luck!

1. The Key Note Speakers at the Republican and Democratic Party conventions are generally considered to be political heavyweights of the future. Which one of the following Presidents was also a Key Note Speaker at a party conven-

a. Harry S. Truman

tion?

- b. Warren G. Harding
- c. Teddy Roosevelt
- d. Lyndon Johnson

- 4. In the event that none of the candidates wins a majority of the electoral college vote, how is the President selected?
- The winner is selected by the House of Representatives.
- b. The winner is selected by the Supreme Court.
- c. The winner is selected by the Senate.
- d. The winner is selected by a flip of a coin.
- 7. State-level primaries and caucuses are relatively new in our election history. Which state was the first state to adopt the primary as a means of choosing Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates in 1904?
- a. Virginia
- b. North Carolina
- c. Florida
- d. New Hampshire



8. Even though primaries and caucuses have existed for some time, they still represented the party lead-

- ers' wishes more than the people's for many elections. What major event
- led to a complete overhaul of the primary system, and formed the basis for today's system?
- a. JFK's razor-thin margin of victory over Nixon in the presidential election that caused party leaders to reexamine the nomination process.
- b. The nomination of Taft over Teddy Roosevelt in 1912, even though Roosevelt won 9 of 13 primaries, and Taft only won 1.
- c. Adlai Stevens' two consecutive nominations and losses as the Democratic Party's nominee.
- d. The violence that surrounded the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.

- 9. According to most sources, where did the term "caucus" originate from?
- a. The Tammany Hall political machine, which liked to use Indian terms, adapted it from the Algonquin word for "counsel.
- b. It evolved from the medieval word for "drinking vessel", and was first used by the Caucus Club of colonial Boston.
- c. It's derived from the word "caulker", which at one time was synonymous with "meeting".
- d. No one is sure which of the above is correct.

10. How many states hold caucuses instead of primaries?

- a. 10
- b. 11
- c. 12
- d. 13

2. Which of the following was *not* a Key Note Speaker at a party convention?

- a. John Glenn
- b. Adlai Stevenson
- c. Douglas MacArthur
- d. Earl Warren

once in our history. Which of the following presidents was selected, not elected?

5. That actually happened

- a. John Q. Adams
- b. Martin Van Buren
- c. Andrew Jackson
- d. Thomas Jefferson





3. How many times in our history have presidential nominees won the popular vote, but lost the election because of the electoral college?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4

- 6. George W. Bush won the 2000 election by five electoral college votes. But, it was not the closest race. Which of the following presidents was elected by a closer Electoral College margin?
- a. John F. Kennedy in 1960.
- b. Rutherford B. Hayes in 1862.
- c. Harry Truman in 1948.
- d. Woodrow Wilson in 1916.

www.fvap.gov

Voting information

Applications

State-specific instructions

Links to state and head officials' websites

Emergency ballots

You will find the answers to this quiz on page 6.



Avian Influenza Information

Avian Influenza, or Bird Flu, has been a concern of world travelers for several years. Diseased birds have been found in many Asian countries, and the virus has spread to 13 countries in the European Union. The German authorities have confirmed outbreaks of Bird Flu in southern and eastern parts of the country over the past several months, and are actively working to contain the problem. No human cases of Bird Flu have been reported in the EU, but caution is still warranted, since it's a very virulent form of influenza, and the mortality rate is quite high. And, of course, since many people living in Germany often travel to countries with widespread outbreaks, it's important to be aware of the risks, and the best ways to avoid becoming infected.

According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other government agencies, the virus is primarily transmitted through direct contact with diseased birds, or poor hygiene or cooking methods by individuals who handled diseased poultry. To date, no cases of Bird Flu have been caused by properly cooked poultry. Neither the State Department nor the WHO have issued travel alerts or warnings because of Bird Flu in any specific country or area; however, health authorities do advise travelers to be careful when traveling to countries with outbreaks in general, and to be particularly cautious of food containing raw eggs in countries with Bird Flu outbreaks in domestic poultry flocks.

It's relatively simple to minimize your risk of exposure. Simply put, don't physically handle wild birds, and pay particular attention to good hygiene and proper handling while cooking any poultry products.

The State Department has published a comprehensive "Avian Flu Fact Sheet", which can be found here.

www.travel.state.gov under International Travel Information see Avian Flu Fact Sheet



Driving in Germany

One of the most obvious differences between living in the United States and Germany is driving – it's simply different here. The only difference isn't just the speed on the autobahns. Many of the traffic rules and practices – particularly the right of way! – vary considerably from U.S. norms. The laws are also different – for example, driving with an expired license can land you in jail. Traffic accidents are the single

also different – for example, driving with an expired license can land you in jail. Traffic accidents are the single biggest health hazard Americans encounter overseas, so it pays to understand the differences. Do you, for example, know the answers to these two questions?

- A driver wants to leave a private driveway and turn right onto a public road. At the same time, a bicyclist is approaching from the left. Who has to wait?
- When a streetcar comes up behind a driver's vehicle while the driver is waiting to make a left turn, what must the driver do?

It also pays to understand the signs, since violating them can earn you an expensive ticket or repair bill! Examples:

- What sign indicates the beginning of a 50 kilometer speed zone in a city?
- True or false: In the city where no priority signs are posted, the driver on the widest street has the right-ofway.

If you're uncertain of the answers to any of these questions, there are several web sites that can help you. Click Driving in Germany at http://germany.usembassy.gov/germany/services/driving_in_germany.html to connect to the U.S. Embassy's web page that addresses general driving tips and differences, as well as insurance, inspection and registration requirements. For a more comprehensive guide, complete with pictures of all the road signs and their meanings and a quiz to test your own knowledge, take a look at the publication issued by the U.S. military forces in Europe for the service and family members. The first section of the pamphlet discusses military-specific concerns, but the second section provides a thorough explanation of the legal and practical differences in the two systems. The test section includes graphic "who has the right of way" questions that we think are particularly helpful in clearing up many very confusing situations. To find the publication on line, click http://rmv.hqusareur.army.mil/drivrman/ss190-34.htm. Alternatively, if you're just curious about what some of those signs mean, simply type "German road signs" into your favorite search engine on line to find the answers.

For the latest travel information please visit the Department of State website:

www.travel.state.gov



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Phone: 030-832-9233 E-mail: ACSBerlin@state.gov Hours: 8:30am-12noon **Monday-Friday**

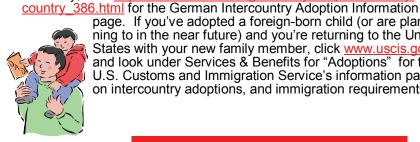
Consular Affairs

www.usembassy.de

Intercountry **Adoption**

We often receive inquiries from American citizens living in Germany who wish to adopt a child, either here in Germany or farther abroad, in places as far as Russia, Kazakhstan, and China. The best place to start for Americans interested in adopting a foreign-born child is www.travel.state.gov. The Office of Children's Issues maintains a web page with a wealth of information on intercountry adoption and provides links to the other U.S. Government agencies that also assists adoptive parents. Click www.travel.state.gov/family/adoption/adoption 485.html for the State Department's Intercountry Adoption web page for a general overview on the issue and links that will take you to the detailed country information pages. If you're interested in adopting a child in Germany, click http://www.travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/

> page. If you've adopted a foreign-born child (or are planning to in the near future) and you're returning to the United States with your new family member, click www.uscis.gov and look under Services & Benefits for "Adoptions" for the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service's information page on intercountry adoptions, and immigration requirements.



U.S Embassy Berlin's Consular District

The U.S Embassy in Berlin, with the assistance of our Consular Agent in Bremen, offers a full range of services for American citizens in the states of:

- **Berlin**
- **Brandenburg**
- Sachsen-Anhalt
- Sachsen
- **Thüringen**
- Hamburg
- **Bremen**
- Niedersachsen
- Schleswig-Holstein
- Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Embassy Closures

- Oct 3rd: Day of German Unity
- Oct 8th: Columbus Day
- Nov 12th: Veterans Day
- Nov 22nd: Thanksgiving
- Dec 25th: First Christmas Day
- **Dec 26th: Second Christmas**

Day

The above dates our offices will be closed. The Embassy observes both American and German Federal and Religious Holidays.

10. D:13

D: No one is sure which answer is correct.

vention in Chicago.

D: The violence that surrounded the 1968 Democratic Con-.8

> C: Florida ۲.

B: Rutherford B. Hayes in 1862 .9

> A: John Q. Adams ٠.

A: The winner is selected by the House of Representatives. ۴.

٤.

B: Adlai Stevenson ٦.

B: Warren G. Haring ٦.

Answers to Election Trivia